



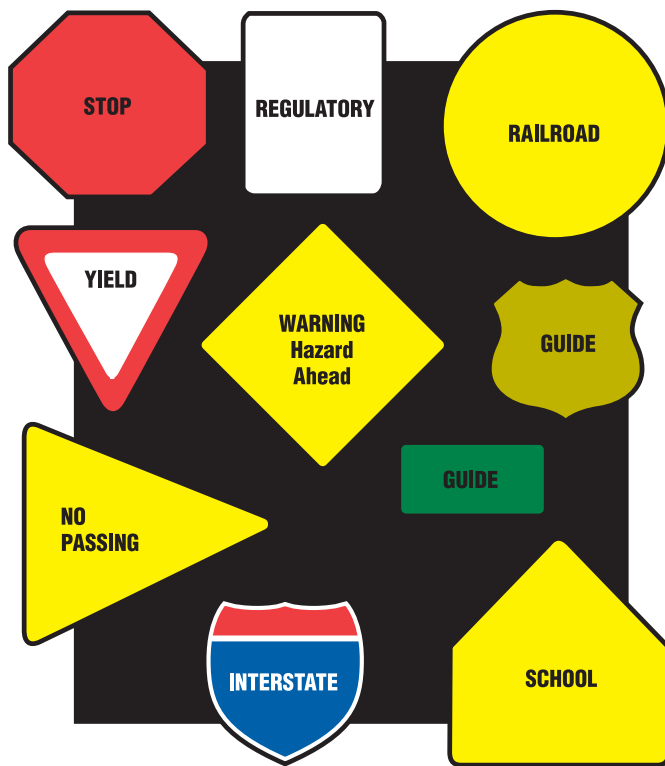
# TRAFFIC SIGNS AND SIGNALS

Traffic signs give you information about the road, the highway system, traffic flow, and the local regulations and laws. They warn you about hazards, identify your route, and direct the speed and movement of traffic. These signs also provide directions and let you know about places of interest, from the huge overhead green interstate signs to the little blue rectangles that direct you to a library or hospital.

Every traffic sign has a definite shape and colors that announce their purpose and specific meanings. You should be able to recognize them immediately. Even if a stop sign is damaged or blocked by dirt, limbs or snow, you should know by the octagonal shape and red color that you must stop.

## Sign Shapes and Colors

Learn the standard colors and shapes (shown below) so you know what a sign means, even at a distance. For example, a rectangle is always a regulatory sign, telling you about laws and regulations or giving you instructions such as speed limits or lane uses.



## Color Codes On Highway Traffic Signs

### Colors of Signs Series

The colors to be used on standard signs shall be as follows:

**RED** is used only as a background color for STOP signs, multiple supplemental plates, DO-NOT-ENTER messages, WRONG WAY signs and on Interstate route markers; as a legend color for YIELD signs, parking prohibition signs, the circular outline and diagonal bar prohibitory symbol.

<b>RED:</b> Stop, yield, do not enter or wrong way.	<b>YELLOW:</b> General warning.	<b>ORANGE:</b> Construction and maintenance warning.	<b>BLACK:</b> Regulatory. Route markers.
<b>BROWN:</b> Public recreation areas and parks.	<b>GREEN:</b> Distance direction and information.	<b>WHITE:</b> Regulatory	<b>BLUE:</b> Motorist services guidance.

*The meanings of the eight basic background colors of signs should be memorized.*

**BLACK** is used as a background on ONE-WAY signs. Black is used as a message on white, yellow and orange signs.

**WHITE** is used as the background for route makers, guide signs, the Fallout Shelter Directional sign, and regulatory signs, except STOP signs, and for the legend on brown, green, blue, black and red signs.

**ORANGE** is used as a background color for construction and maintenance signs and shall not be used for any other purpose.

**YELLOW** is used as a background color for warning signs, except where orange is specified herein, and for school signs.

**BROWN** is used as a background color for guide information signs related to points of recreational cultural interest.

**GREEN** is used as a background color for guide signs (other than those using brown or white), mileposts, and as a legend color with a white background for permissive parking regulations.

**BLUE** is used as a background color for information signs related to motorist services (including police services and rest areas) and the Evacuation Route Marker.

**Four Other Colors** — Purple, light blue, coral, and strong yellow-green have been identified as suitable for highway use and are being reserved for future needs.

Whenever white is specified herein as a sign color, it is understood to include silver-colored reflecting coating or elements that reflect white light.

**Traffic signs are placed to help you and to instruct you in the best and safest use of the highway. All signs must be obeyed at all times unless a policeman or other traffic officer directs you to do otherwise. Study and learn the signs on the following pages and notice that the shape of each sign has a general or specific meaning.**

## Octagon Shape — Stop

This sign is the only eight-sided sign you will see on the highway. It always means that there is danger. It will always be red with white lettering. It tells you that you are approaching an important street or highway and that you must bring your car to a complete stop, not going beyond the crosswalk. If you cannot see, then proceed cautiously to a point where you can see, and then go only if you can do so safely.



**4-Way or All Way:** Red Rectangle — Added below a stop sign, means all traffic approaching this intersection must stop.



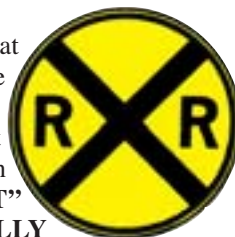
## Triangular Shape — Yield

This three-sided sign means that you are approaching an intersection and must stop and wait if any other vehicles are approaching from the right or left on the other highway. If you are sure no other cars are coming you need not come to a complete stop but you must slow down and enter the intersection with caution. You must stop when traffic warrants.



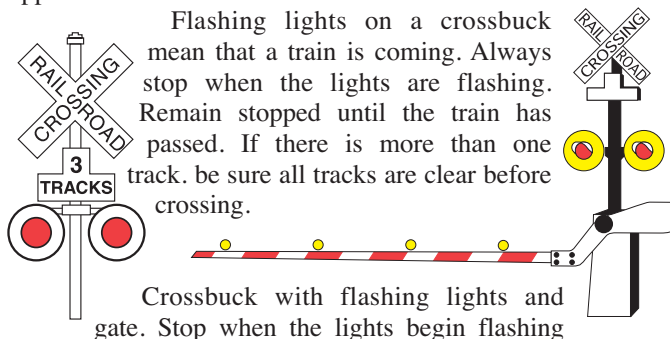
## Round Shape — Railroad Ahead

This circular sign always means that you are approaching a railroad grade crossing. You must slow down and be ready to stop. This sign tells you that it is up to you to stop if you see a train coming. **NEVER TRY TO “BEAT” THE TRAIN. YOU WILL USUALLY MISJUDGE ITS SPEED.** More than 200 traffic crashes occur each year at railroad crossings. Do not play with your life trying to “beat the train.”



## Broad “X” Shape — Railroad Here

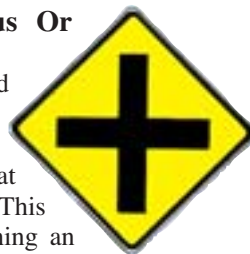
This is known as a crossbuck sign. It is placed at all railroad grade crossings, and tells you exactly where the tracks are located. Notice the smaller signs placed on the post directly below the crossbuck. They will tell you the number of tracks at a particular crossing. This is very important because, when there are two or more tracks, one train passing might hide the approach of a train from the other direction.



and before the gate comes down. Remain stopped until the gates are raised and the lights stop flashing.

## Diamond Shape — Hazardous Or Unusual Condition Ahead

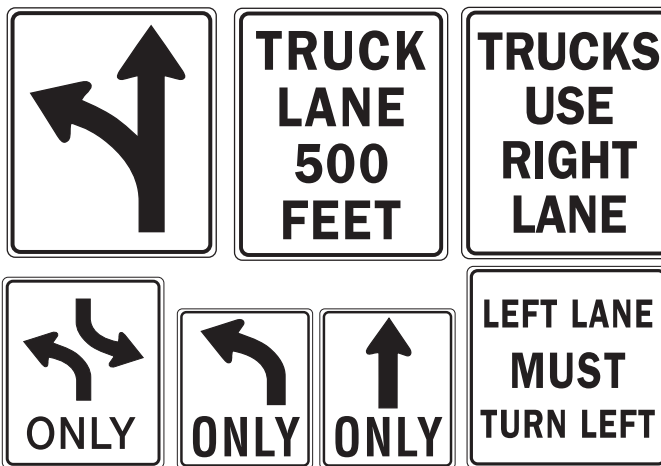
These signs call for caution and usually for a slower speed. Some carry written information. Others are miniature symbolic road maps that warn of highway conditions ahead. This sign tells you that you are approaching an intersection. The black lines show you just what kind of intersection this is. This sign tells you it is a crossroad. *(See more examples of warning signs on pages 43-44)*



## Rectangular Shape—Special Laws, Regulations Or Important Information Applies Here

### • Lane Control

The signs below indicate that traffic in the respective lanes must either move straight through or turn left. They may also direct certain vehicles (such as trucks) as to which lane



they must travel. Variations of these signs will limit turns by showing an arrow with the word “Only,” and others will indicate that traffic must turn right. These signs are sometimes mounted overhead.

The sign shown at right (High Occupancy Vehicle) indicates lanes reserved for buses and vehicles with the minimum number of occupants specified on the sign.



### • Speed Control

**Speed Limit Signs.** These signs tell you the maximum speed allowed, the minimum speed required, or of a change in speed limit.



The sign on the far right is used whenever children are within walking distance of school. It tells you that children may be crossing the street on their way to and from school.

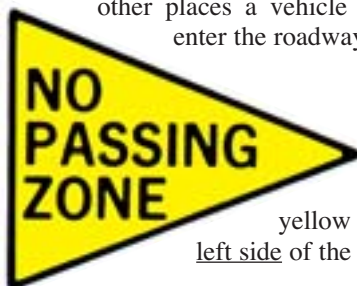
This type of sign is controlled by a time clock and flashes yellow lights while illuminating the speed limit. Failure to obey the posted school zone limit could result in serious injury or loss of life to Tennessee's most valuable asset, its children.

### Regulatory Signs



This sign is used on a highway which has four lanes or more. It means that you must drive in the extreme right-lane unless you want to pass a slower-moving car or make a left turn. Never straddle lanes or drive in the center lane when you are moving more slowly than other traffic around you.

- *No Passing Signs* - These signs tell you where passing is not permitted. Passing areas are based on how far you can see ahead. They consider unseen hazards such as hills and curves, intersections, driveways and other places a vehicle may enter the roadway.



A triangular No Passing Zone sign can also be used. These signs are yellow or orange and placed on the left side of the roadway.

These signs which have a white background and a red circle and line diagonally through them mean "NO" according to what is shown behind the red symbol. For example:



NO TRUCKS



NO BICYCLES



NO LEFT TURN



NO U TURN



This sign tells you that, in the area where this sign is placed parking is forbidden.

This sign tells you that you are approaching a one-way street and that you must not enter from the direction you are traveling.



Tennessee law (T.C.A. 55-8-139) makes it illegal to stand in a roadway to solicit a ride. Hitchhiking is not only dangerous to the pedestrian, but also to the driver of the vehicle who stops to pick up a stranger. It is recommended that you neither hitchhike nor pick up hitchhikers.

## Warning Signs



This sign tells you to be prepared for a rather sharp turn to the left. The turn sign is used to mark turns with a recommended speed of 30 m.p.h. or less.

### Curve Sign

This sign tells you that you must be prepared for a curve to the right. The curve sign is used to mark curves with recommended speed in the range between 30 and 55 m.p.h.



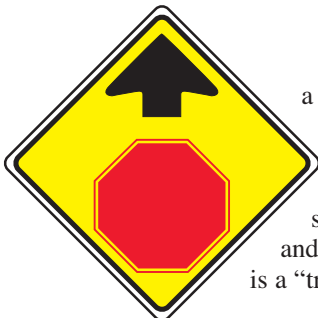
### Reverse Turn Sign

This sign tells you that you must turn right, then left. The reverse turn sign is used to mark two turns in opposite directions that are less than 600 feet apart.

### Advisory Speed Plate

The smaller sign on the post beneath this sign is used to supplement warning signs. It gives you the recommended maximum safe speed.

You will see this sign — or one saying, “SLIDES” in some hilly areas. Both of these signs warn of rocks which may be in the road; not of rocks which may strike you from overhead. Watch the roadway, not the hill.

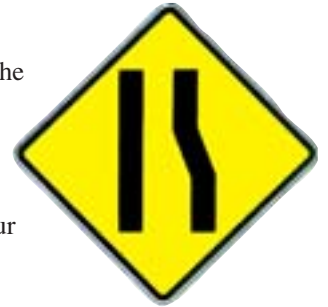


This sign indicates that there is a STOP sign you can't yet see just ahead — so you should start to slow down at this point. A similar sign using a symbol shaped like a traffic light and the black arrow indicates there is a “traffic signal ahead.”



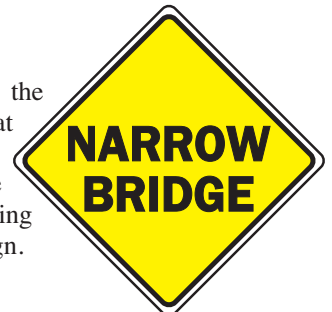
This sign indicates that there is a YIELD sign you can't yet see just ahead — so you should start to slow down at this point.

This sign warns you that the road ahead narrows and that you must plan to move into the left lane. Don't forget to check behind you before you begin this maneuver and signal your intentions.



This sign alerts you to the possibility of traffic blending into the main stream of travel. After checking to your rear you should move into the other lane, if possible, to allow the merging motorist a clear path.

This sign tells you that the bridge is too narrow to be safe at average passing speeds; you must slow down and drive cautiously when you are crossing a bridge which displays this sign.



You will see the following sign near school grounds or buildings. This sign warns you to slow down, drive with caution, and watch for children. It is placed as you approach a school.



## Warning Signs



SLIPPERY WHEN WET



CATTLE CROSSING



TWO-WAY TRAFFIC



LEFT LANE ENDS



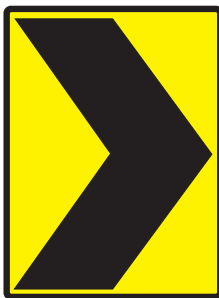
BIKE CROSSING



WINDING ROAD



LOW CLEARANCE



**CHEVRON**  
A sharp change in  
direction ahead



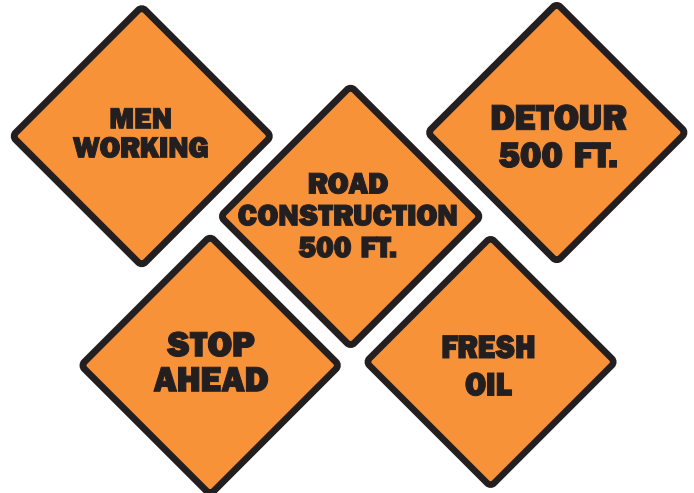
T-INTERSECTION AHEAD



**T-INTERSECTION**  
You must turn right or left. Be  
prepared to yield.

**Work Area Signs** - These construction, maintenance or emergency operations signs are generally **diamond or rectangular** shaped, **orange with black letters or symbols** and warn you that people are working on or near the roadway. These warnings include reduced speed, detours, slow moving construction equipment and lane closures. In work areas, a person with a sign or flag may control traffic. You must obey the directions of these persons.

## Construction Signs



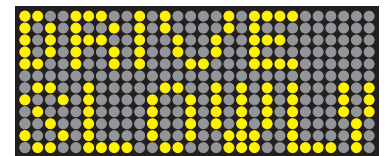
## Channeling Devices

**Barricades**, vertical panels, concrete barriers, drums and Channeling Devices  
Used to direct traffic flow.



cones are the most common devices used to guide drivers safely through work zones. When driving near these devices, keep your vehicle in the middle of the lane and obey the posted speed limit. As you leave the work zone, stay in your lane and maintain your speed. Don't change lanes until you are completely clear of the work zone.

**Electronic Message** or Arrow Signs - These are mobile devices that are often used on some roadways to give you advance warning of construction zones, special traffic directions, road closures or in some cases weather hazards.



**Flashing arrow panels** advise approaching drivers of lane closures. You must begin to merge into the remaining



open lane(s) well in advance of this sign.

## Highway Flaggers

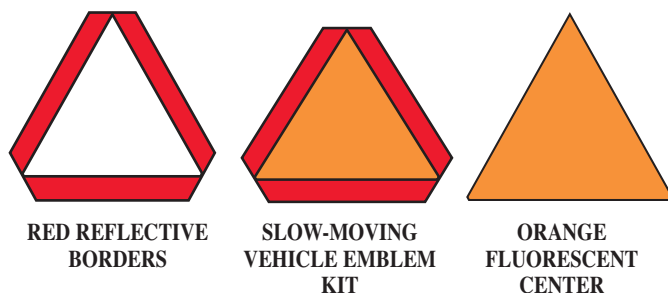
You will see flaggers such as these pictured below at numerous construction sites along our highways.

Please learn these three simple signals since they are the most commonly used by construction flaggers.



Flaggers at some worksites may use paddles with the word stop on one side and slow on the other instead of red flags. The basic hand movements for stop and proceed remain the same whether a flag or paddle is used.

## Slow-Moving Vehicle (SMV) Emblem



Recognize this sign. Some day (or night) it may save your life. Look at it!

During daylight the bright fluorescent orange solid triangle in the center of the SMV emblem is highly visible. At night, the SMV emblem glows brilliantly in the path of approaching headlights.

You may see this emblem on slow-moving vehicles such as farm tractors, machinery, construction equipment, or horse-drawn vehicles.

## Object Marker



Hazard to left

These markers warn you of objects not actually in the roadway but so close to the edge of the road that they need marking.

Typical applications include bridge ends, underpass abutments and other obstructions closely adjacent to the edges of the roadway.



Hazard to right

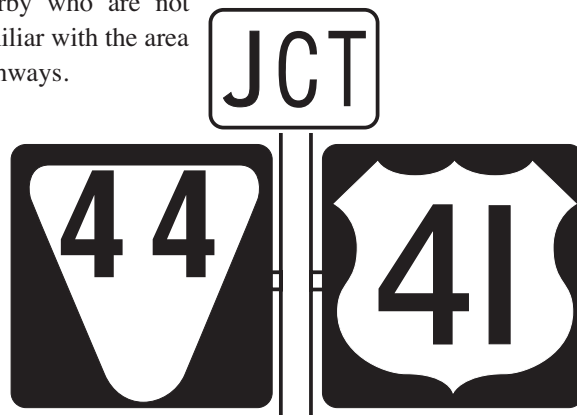
## Guide Signs For Highways



**PRIMARY ROUTE**  
(Primarily Connects Cities)

A sign such as the one below will show two highways are coming together or separating. The sign to the left denotes a State secondary highway while the one to the right indicates a U.S. highway that will reach into another state. Drivers should become thoroughly familiar with route

numbers and signs they must follow when beginning a trip from one area to another. They should approach signs such as the one below with caution and should be alert for drivers nearby who are not familiar with the area highways.



## Interstate Route Marker

Indicates that the route is one of the routes comprising the national system of interstate and defense highways. These highways join centers of population and defense establishments and join with the major international highways at the Mexican and Canadian borders, they constitute a nationwide network of the most important highways.



## Guide Signs On Interstates

These are signs to help you while driving on Tennessee's



Interstate and Defense Highways. The signs are above or to the right of the highway with the arrows pointing to the lane you should be in if you intend to enter or leave the road.

This sign is seen on Interstates and Expressways. The background is green with white lettering and/or numbers visible at some distance. Such signs give information vital to selection of lane, proper exits, etc.



If an Interstate guide sign is marked with the above sign, all traffic in the lane(s) directly below the arrows **MUST** exit.

## Service Signs

The blue color of these signs indicates that they provide direction to motorist service facilities. Word message signs will also be used to direct motorists to areas where service stations, restaurants and motels are available.



## Handicap Symbol

Parking spaces displaying this blue sign are reserved for vehicles bearing disabled veteran or handicapped license plates, or a special handicapped decal. The use of reserved handicapped spaces by others is prohibited by law. Please be courteous!



## Directional Signs

The green background signs indicate that the message is providing directional information. New directional signs will point to bike and hiking trails.



## Reference Markers



RAMP SIGN

In order to help motorists better identify their location on urban interstates, the state has installed interstate reference markers every 1,000 feet along heavily traveled sections. These have been installed in Nashville and Knoxville, and are planned for Memphis and Chattanooga in the near future.

The signs display information about the route number, direction of travel, and the "log mile" in tenths of a mile. Most are mounted on the median dividers. Thus, motorists with mobile phones who notify emergency operators about incidents will be able to give an accurate description of the exact location where assistance is needed. This will help emergency personnel respond more rapidly, and possibly make the difference between life and death. It will also help clear the highways more quickly. *In the sample (at right) this sign indicates the location as: West Bound on Interstate 40 at mile marker 223 and 6 tenths. So the driver would be between mile markers 223 and 224.*



MAIN LINE SIGN

## Uniform Highway Markings

The information in Chapter Seven is taken from the United States Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices, which all highway agencies must use in marking and signing roadways under their jurisdiction. Until all states have completed marking, drivers may encounter both the old and new markings. BE ALERT and follow directions.

Word and symbol markings on the pavement are used for the purpose of guiding, warning, or regulating traffic.

Symbol arrows indicating more than one movement is permitted; arrows indicating only one movement is mandatory.

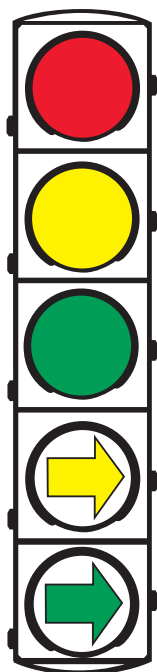


## Traffic Signals

Traffic signals are used to control drivers of vehicles and pedestrians at some intersections and crosswalks. Signals promote better movement of traffic on busy roads by assigning right of way. Tennessee state law requires that if a signal is not working, the intersection is to be treated as if it were a four-way stop intersection. Stop as you would if there were stop signs in all directions and do not proceed until it is safe. Common courtesy and the right-of-way law instructs that if there are two or more vehicles at the intersection that stopped at the same time, the driver on the left would yield to the driver on the right. The driver on the right who arrives first gets to go first. However, stay cautious and be sure it is safe to proceed even when you are the first vehicle to reach the intersection.

Traffic control devices include traffic signals, signs and pavement markings. Traffic control can also be provided by law enforcement, highway construction personnel or school crossing guards. You must obey directions from these individuals, even if their directions are different than what the traffic lights and signs indicate. Also remember that regardless of the color of a traffic signal ALL vehicles must yield the right-of-way to any approaching emergency vehicles.

**1. Traffic Signals** are usually placed at heavily traveled intersections. These lights tell you when or where to stop and go. A green light means you can go if it is safe. A yellow light means caution, prepare to stop for the red light and the red always means stop. Standard traffic lights are red, yellow and green, from top to bottom respectively.



**RED** — Stop behind crosswalk or stop line. Unless otherwise posted, you may turn right on red after coming to a complete stop and when no pedestrians or cross traffic are present.

**YELLOW** — Caution, prepare to stop. Red stop signal will be exhibited immediately thereafter. Adjust your speed immediately so you may come to a smooth stop. You must stop if it is safe to do so. **DO NOT SPEED UP TO BEAT THE LIGHT.** If you are already IN the intersection when the yellow light comes on, do not stop but continue cautiously through the intersection. Tennessee law only requires the yellow light to be exhibited for a minimum of **3 SECONDS before the red light.**

*Collisions often happen at intersections on yellow lights. Not only is it dangerous for you to ignore the yellow light because you may hold up oncoming traffic that receives*

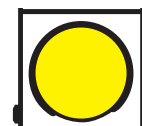
*the green light, you also must be aware that some drivers often “jump the green” and start through an intersection because they have seen the yellow light come on from the crossing directions. If you try to “beat the yellow” and another driver decides to “jump the green” the results could be deadly!*

**GREEN** — Go IF the intersection is clear. You must yield to pedestrians and vehicles still in the intersection at light change. The green signal gives you the permission to proceed, however you must still observe the laws of the right-of-way. Yield to oncoming vehicles if you are turning left. Never attempt to “jump the gree” by starting through the intersection early or by making a quick left turn in front of oncoming traffic. This is extremely dangerous!

**Protected Arrows** - At many intersections you may see what is called a “protected turn arrow”. when the arrow is green, you have the right-of-way and may drive the vehicle only in the direction of the arrow after yielding to vehicles and pedestrians already in the intersection. When the arrow changes to yellow, prepare to yield to oncoming traffic. When the arrow is red or your lane has the red light, all turns are prohibited, even if other lanes of traffic have a green signal and your path through the intersection appears to be clear.

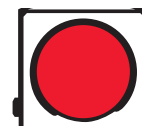
When traffic lights have added lights with directional arrows, drivers may cautiously enter the intersection only to make the movement indicated by the arrow. The light for your lane controls the direction in which you may lawfully proceed.

If traffic circumstances have left you in an intersection waiting to make a left turn, and the light turns red, you should complete the turn when the traffic clears. Do not try to back up, or stay in the intersection blocking traffic. Better yet, don’t find yourself in this situation! You should not pull into an intersection to make a turn until your path is clear.



**FLASHING YELLOW**

*Slow down and proceed with caution at the intersection.*



**FLASHING RED**

*Complete stop. Same as stop sign. Look both ways, yield to traffic and pedestrians and proceed when it is safe to do so.*

**2. Pedestrian Signals** - allow pedestrians to know when it is legally permitted and safe to cross a street or intersection. Pedestrians can promote traffic safety and protect themselves by observing the following rules:

A. “Walk” Sign: Many streets with significant pedestrian traffic will have a pedestrian signal that displays the word “WALK” or a symbol of a person walking when it is legally permitted and safe to cross the street or intersection.



Pedestrians who have started to cross the street or intersection when the “WALK” sign or walking person symbol appears should continue as quickly as possible to the other side of the street if the signal shifts to “DON’T WALK”.

*Please note: At some intersections there is a button near the base of the pedestrian signal or stop light that must be pushed by the pedestrian to activate the pedestrian signal to show the “WALK” sign.*

B. “Don’t Walk” Sign: Pedestrian signals indicate when it is not legally permissible nor safe to





cross a street or intersection. When the pedestrian signal shows the words “DON’T WALK” or a symbol of a raised hand appears it is not legally permitted nor safe to begin crossing a street or intersection.

### 3. Lane Control Signals



Driving in this lane is permitted



If flashing lane is for turning only, if solid direction of lane is changing



Driving is NOT Permitted in this lane

The above signals may appear as single or multiple units over each lane of the roadway, and are most often used when the direction of the flow of traffic changes during different hours of the day. Also indicates toll plaza lane open or closed. (See Chapter 8, page 66 for details on reversible lanes)

## General Principles of Pavement Lane Markings

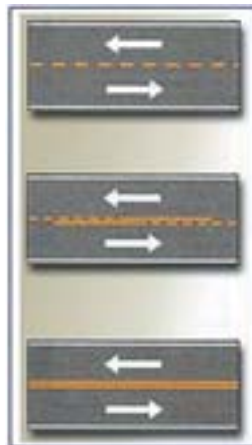
Lines and symbols on the roadway divide it into lanes, tell you when you may pass other vehicles or change lanes, which lanes to use for turns, define pedestrian walkways and show where you must stop for signs or traffic signals. Line colors tell you if you are on a one-way or two-way roadway.

**1. Edge and Lane Lines** - Lines along the side of the road show you where the edge of the road is located. A solid white line indicates the right edge of the traffic lane on a road. A solid or broken yellow line indicates the left edge of traffic lanes going in your direction.

- If you ever find yourself with yellow to your right and white to your left, you are going the wrong way. Remember, on a divided highway **the side of the roadway to the left of the driver and nearest the median, always has a yellow line. The right side of the roadway will always have a white line.** It is a good way to confirm you are traveling the right direction when entering an unfamiliar interstate.

**A. Yellow Lane Markings** - Lines separating traffic moving in opposite directions are yellow. Yellow lines are also used to mark a boundary or barrier of the travel path at the location of a particular hazard such as bridge supports, etc.

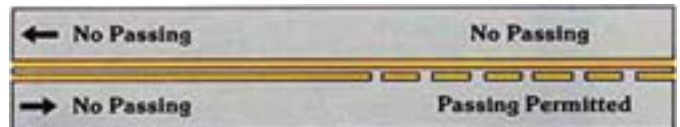
- **Broken yellow lines** mean that you **MAY cross the line to pass** if there is no oncoming traffic and it is safe to do so.
- **Two solid yellow lines** between lanes of traffic means you **MAY NOT cross the lines from either**



**direction to pass** even if no oncoming traffic is in view. You may cross a solid yellow line to turn into a driveway or side road if it is safe to do so.

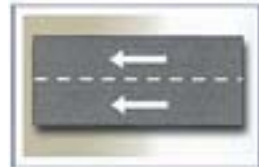
- **One solid yellow line and one broken yellow line:** Where there is both a solid and a broken yellow line between opposing lanes of traffic, you **may not pass if the solid yellow line is on your side.** If the **broken yellow line is on your side, you are in the “passing zone” and may pass** if it is safe to do so. You must safely return to your side of the roadway **before** the passing zone ends.

**B. White Lane Markings** - Multiple lanes of traffic that flow in the same direction are separated by white lane markings.

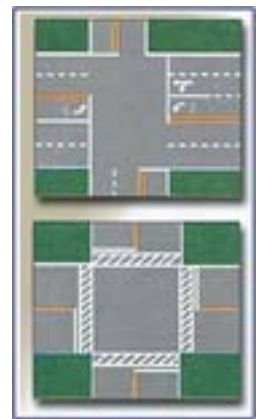


You will find white lane markings on freeways, limited access highways, by-passes and one-way streets.

- **Broken white lines** between lanes of traffic mean you **MAY cross the lines to pass** or change lanes if it is safe to do so.
- **One solid white line** between lanes of traffic means that you should stay in your lane and **MAY NOT cross the line to pass** (unless an emergency situation requires you to change lanes).



**2. Crosswalks** - White crosswalk lines are painted across a road to indicate pedestrian crossing areas. Crosswalks define the area where pedestrians may cross the roadway and can be at intersections or in the middle of a block. However, not all crosswalks are marked. You must yield the right-of-way to pedestrians who are in or are about to enter crosswalk or street.

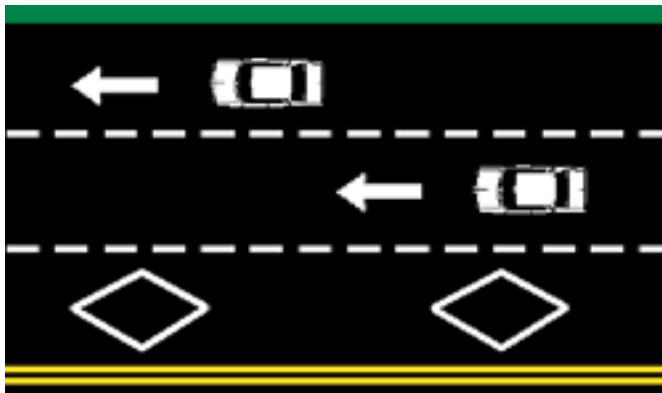


**3. Stop Lines** - White stop lines are painted on the pavement across traffic lanes, usually at intersections, to indicate the vehicle stopping position before traffic signs or signals. If the motorist is required to stop at the intersection the vehicle must be stopped behind this stop line (A). If no

Stop Line (A)	Crosswalk (B)	Neither (C)

stop line is painted on the pavement all vehicles required to stop must: **(B)** Stop the vehicle before crossing the first line of the crosswalk (if crosswalk marked) and: **(C)** Stop the vehicle before the front bumper crosses the white edge line of the cross street in order to keep the vehicle from protruding out into the cross street traffic.

**4. High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes** are designated on highways by a diamond-shaped marking in the center of the lane. HOV lanes may also be special lanes separated by a barrier. During heavy traffic periods, HOV lanes are reserved for buses, vanpools, carpools and other high occupancy vehicles. Road signs indicate the

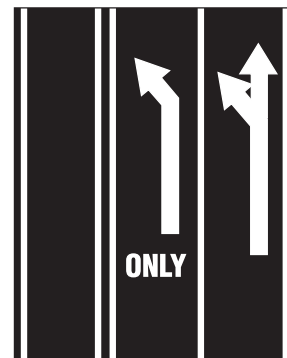


*In the accompanying three-lane diagram, the far left travel lane is reserved for buses or high-occupancy vehicles (HOVs), like those used in carpools.*

minimum number of passengers a vehicle must carry to use the HOV lanes and the times that HOV restrictions are in effect.

#### 5. Turn Lane Arrow

If you are traveling in a lane marked with a curved arrow and the word **ONLY**, you must turn in the direction of the arrow. If your lane is marked with both a curved and a straight arrow, you may turn in the direction of the arrow or you may go straight.



**A white cross-buck and the letters RR are painted on the pavement as a warning marker for many railroad/highway grade crossings.**